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ABSTRACT

Teachers, especially home economics teachers, would be better prepared to evaluate subject matter and to separate fact and personal opinion if they had a better understanding of diverse student backgrounds. To find out such background information, a study was conducted to analyze attitudes and values held by junior and senior students in home economics classes in northwest Ohio high schools to determine differences among students from urban, suburban, and rural geosocial environments. Population for the survey consisted of 246 students from 20 schools randomly selected from among the urban, suburban, rural, and joint vocational schools in the area. They were administered a questionnaire containing 10 items on demographic data and 79 self-inventory items correlating with value judgments concerning adults, careers and work, children, education, family, friends, feeling toward males and females, home, home economics, marriage, money, self-image, and sex equity. Results of the survey were summarized as follows: (1) Suburban and rural students held similar attitudes and values in all areas except money (rural youth placed greater emphasis on sharing with family) and sex equity (suburban youth held more traditional beliefs). (2) The greatest differences were found between urban and vocational school students, and each of these groups was different from suburban and rural. Vocational students reflected more negative attitudes. (3) Urban students valued education more than other geosocial groups, and females valued it more than males. Attitudes toward education reflected the level of education attained by the parents, in all cases. (4) Attitudes and values held by boys were significantly different from those of girls with regard to careers, work, and education. (KC)

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An Analysis of High School Home Economics Students Attitudes in Different Geosocial Environments

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of
the American Vocational Association
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Atlanta, Georgia

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years colleges and universities have been under criticism and reform has been suggested in relation to the quality of education provided to preprofessional teachers. Student and teacher mobility, partly as a result of desegration efforts, has increased the likelihood of educators being placed in schools with a cultural setting different from their own. Therefore, teacher education courses need further revision to include an understanding of the varing attitudes and values that may result from the different geographic/social-geo-social environments of the students. Current research has not addressed educational leadership from this multicultural perspective; theories have typically been predicated on the values and attitudes of a particular culture and then generalized to depict crosscultural humankind. These theories do not take into consideration the differences among urban, suburban, and rural educational environments nor vocational centers where students may represent urban, suburban, and rural cultures.

Many teachers may not have had the background needed to adapt their teaching methods to the differences in socio-economic levels, cultural backgrounds and geographic locations of their students. Appropriate adaptions may minimize discipline and attitude problems encountered by teachers as they are confronted with students from geographic cultures.

Teachers should have an understanding of the students' frames of reference if their teaching techniques are to allow them to reach the goal of creating an educational atmosphere that will facilitate learning. To improve instructional effectiveness in culturally different educational environments, thereby increasing the student's opportunities to learn, the preprofessional courses need to include content and experiences designed to increase teacher knowledge, skills, and abilities in the affective domain.

Preprofessional teachers need to be provided with relevant education concerning the cultural differences in the urban, suburban and rural educational settings, thereby controlling the imposition of teacher values on the students. Home Economics teachers deal with aspects of home and family living that require daily value decisions. Such teachers would be better able to evaluate subject matter and to differentiate between "fact" and personal opinion if they are adequately prepared to understand diverse student backgrounds. For this study home economics students were selected because of the potential their teachers have for wide-spread long-lasting influence in sensitive areas.

The study was to analyze attitudes and values held by junior and senior students in home economics classes in northwest Ohio comprehensive high schools to determine differences among students from urban, suburban, and rural geosocial environments. In addition there was a comparison of these findings with those obtained for students attending joint vocational schools to identify differences that may be attributed to the different socializations in these schools.

A stratified random sample was used to select 5 schools from each of the categories, urban (10), suburban (38), rural (79), and joint vocational schools (8). From each of these schools one class of either juniors or seniors were selected to participate in the survey. This selection was made by the local school principal or home economics teacher. All students present in class the day of the survey had the opportunity to participate.

The questionnaire consisted of 10 items on demographic data and 79 self-inventory items that translated into student attitude and value judgments in the following areas: adults, careers and work, children, education, family, friends, feelings toward males and females, home, home economics, marriage, money, self-image, and sex equity. These specific areas were selected for measurement as they relate directly to the standards of home and work life that is the basis for much of the home economics curricula.

Survey results were tested using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with a posteriori contrast, lease significant differences (LSD) and Duncan multiple range tests for comparing all possible pairs of means. Differences in urban, suburban, rural and joint vocational school groups were reported only when the LSD and Duncan tests agreed. Responses were tested by subgroups for several independent variables: geosocial groups; sex; place of residence (with mother, father, or both); family size; parents' income level; parents' education.

Findings

The demographic data was analyzed providing the following profile of the participants. In looking at students place of residency and location of school attended, it shows that school districts were not mutually exclusive in being an urban, suburban, or rural area by definition. Nor were the student populations made up of homogenous cultures.

Percentage Distribution by Background of
Students in Urban, Suburban, Rural Schools

School Type	Urban	Suburban	Rural	No Response
Urban	97.1	--	--	2.9
Suburban	11.9	66.1	18.6	3.4
Rural	--	29.2	70.8	--
Joint Vocational	31.2	27.1	37.5	4.2

The study consisted of 246 students from 20 schools. The following is the breakdown by sex in the four types of schools. Note there were no males in the urban population, a result of the random sampling process or class selection. This is not representative of classes in the urban schools. Much of the literature indicates that the difference in culture are race related. The sample consisted of 7.3% Black and 3.7% Mexican-American. The family structure indicated that 64.2% of the students lived with both parents and 22.4% from single parent families. Seven students were married and twelve had children of their own; none of these students were from the suburban geosocial group.

Distribution of Students by Sex
in the Four School Classifications

	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Vocational	Total
Male	0	28	27	9	64
Female	67	31	45	39	182
Total	67	59	72	48	246

In the analysis of the attitudes and values of urban, suburban, rural and joint vocational school students for the areas of adults, careers and work, children, education, family, friends, feelings toward males and females, home, home economics, marriage, money, self-image, and sex equity there was a significant difference at the .05 level for six of the areas. The six areas which showed a difference in the geosocial groups were education, family, home, home economics, self-image, and sex equity.

In analysis of the independent variables there was significant difference in the geosocial group with urban students placing a higher value on education than did their peers in the other geosocial group. In comparing males and females - females put a higher value on education.

Analysis of Variance Results for Values and Attitudes Toward Education

Variables	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F-Ratio
Geosocial Groups				
Between Groups	3	3.69	1.23	7.59*
Within Groups	237	38.40	.16	
Sex				
Between Groups	1	1.84	1.84	10.94*
Within Groups	239	40.25	.17	
Income				
Between Groups	3	.35	.12	.63
Within Groups	113	21.06	.19	
Mothers' Education				
Between Groups	4	1.57	.39	2.28
Within Groups	215	37.16	.17	
Fathers' Education				
Between Groups	4	2.00	.50	2.93*
Within Groups	201	34.28	.17	

*p $<$ .05 level

In relation to the family it was found the geosocial group and parents education made a difference. The analysis showed fewer vocational and rural students felt that two parents were necessary. Attitudes towards family varied disproportionately with parent education levels.

Analysis for home and geosocial groups there were no significant differences indicated. It did yield a difference between students at the joint vocational schools and those in comprehensive high schools where vocational school students were significantly differen than urban and suburban. This closely paralleled their responses to family.

The Home Economics multiple comparison tests resulted in significant difference between urban students and the other three groups, Urban students indicated a preference for learning about child care while the suburban, rural, and joint vocational student favored the more traditional cooking and sewing. Overall 40.3% of the four geosocial groups indicated a preference for either human relationships or consumer economics.

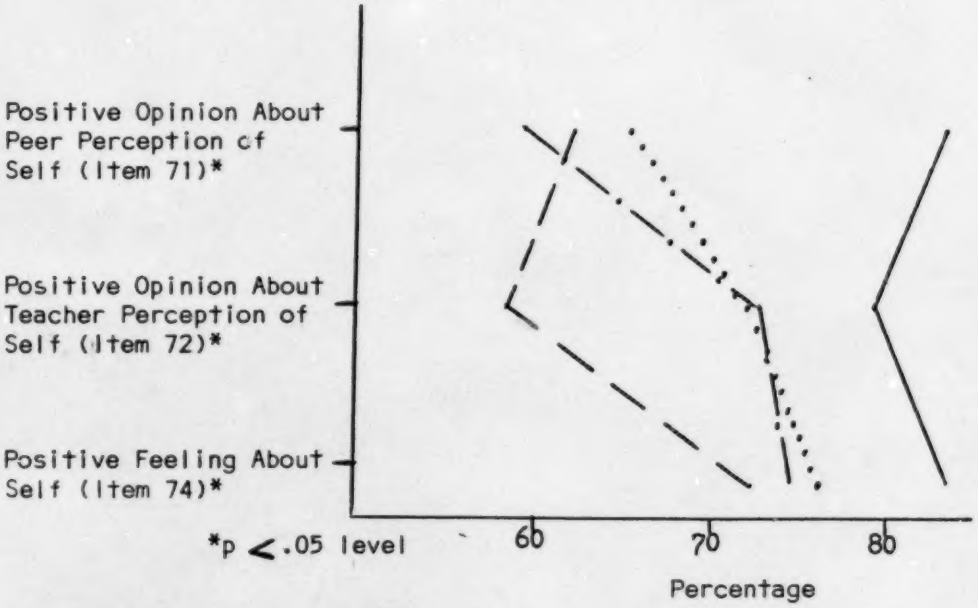
Mean Scores for Attitudes Toward Home Economics
Based on Geosocial Environment

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Urban	63	3.32*	.37
Suburban	51	3.15	.35
Rural	62	3.12	.38
Vocational	44	3.17	.37

*$p < .05$ level

Urban students self-image were significantly different at the .05 level from suburban, rural, and vocational school students. The majority of students from each geosocial area indicated they believed adolescents had positive attitudes toward self-images, but the degree of positiveness varied. Urban students differed from the other groups in all cases.

Percentage Responses Representing Significant Differences in Attitudes Toward Self-Image


Positive Opinion About Peer Perception of Self (Item 71)*
Positive Opinion About Teacher Perception of Self (Item 72)*
Positive Feeling About Self (Item 74)*
*p < .05 level
60
70
80
Percentage

Key: Urban _____
Suburban __.__.__.
Rural.....
Vocational _ _ _ _ _

Suburban students were significantly more traditional when it comes to sex equity than students from urban, rural or vocational schools.

Mean Scores by Geosocial Groups
for Attitudes Toward Sex Equity

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Urban	59	2.91	.32
Suburban	56	2.72*	.41
Rural	68	2.85	.39
Vocational	44	2.83	.33

*p .05 level

Results of the survey were summarized as follows:

1. Suburban and rural students held similar attitudes and values in all areas measured except (a) money, where rural placed a greater emphasis on sharing with the family while suburban youth were more inclined to spend their money; and (b) sex equity, where suburban had significantly more traditional beliefs about male and female roles in society.

2. Suburban and rural students shared common attitudes and values in several areas: the characteristics of understanding and respect for others were most valued in adults' they had positive attitudes toward most adults but had relatively low opinions of teachers; education was valued above work, family, marriage; two parent families with two children were considered ideal; and, they had positive self-images. Suburban, rural and urban students felt contemporary men and women should be more concerned about themselves than with sex equity.

3. The greatest differences were found to be between urban and vocational school students, and each of these geosocial groups was different from suburban and rural. Urban students indicated higher levels of respect for adults in general and their mothers in particular; they placed honesty above respect for others in characteristics most admired in adults; more of them believed a college education was necessary for a career; they placed a higher value on education; and, they indicated more positive attitudes toward home economics.

Vocational school students, however, tended to reflect more negative attitudes. Fewer vocational school students felt that adults trust youth; they placed less importance on education; they held the family in lower esteem and depended less on relationships with family members; and, home life was placed relatively low in importance. Vocational school students were, however, most inclined to believe that careers were possible without post-secondary education.

4. No statistically significant differences were found between urban, suburban, rural and vocational school students with respect to attitudes and values held for adults, careers and work, children, friends, and feelings about males and females.

5. More differences were found in attitudes toward education than any other area measured. Only suburban and rural students shared common opinions on the value of education. Urban students tended to value education more than students from the other geosocial groups, and females valued it more than males. In all cases, the attitudes toward education generally reflected the level of education attained by the parents.

Parent education levels had a greater impact on student attitudes and values than any other independent variable used in the analyses. Attitudes toward education, family, home, marriage, and money were directly affected; higher levels of parent education yielded higher student values for these variables.

6. Attitudes and values held by adolescent boys were significantly different from those of adolescent girls with regard to careers and work, and education. Females placed a higher value on education and were more inclined to equate careers to college education.